

NEW YORK NEWS WORLD
19 February 1978

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Experts refute CIA - Soviet civil defense

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NEWS WORLD WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—Two experts on Soviet civil defense capabilities disagreed sharply yesterday with statements released Friday indicating that the CIA does not place great significance on the massive Soviet preparations.

Dr. Eugene Wigner, Nobel prize-winning physicist, and retired Gen. George Keegan, former chief of Air Force intelligence, both disagreed with Adm. Stansfield Turner, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. In testimony before Congress last June, Turner said he did not believe the Soviet Union's civil defense preparations "could prevent a general breakdown in the Soviet economy in the event of an American retaliatory strike."

Although the Soviet Union has built an extensive system of fallout shelters to protect its population and has carefully dispersed its factories to avoid their being wiped out by a U.S. attack, Turner said the CIA does not interpret these steps "as meaning that the Soviets are planning to initiate nuclear warfare."

"Did he talk to the Russians and they told him they have no aggressive intentions?" Wigner questioned yesterday in a telephone interview. "Why do they spend one-third of their gross national product on military

equipment?" he added.

"I don't know what the Soviets plan to initiate," Wigner said, "but the impression one gets is that they constantly claim that to destroy capitalist countries is all right, but to destroy socialism is a terrible crime."

Wigner referred to estimates made by himself and others that only between 2 percent and 5 percent of the Soviet Union's population would be vulnerable to a U.S. nuclear attack, while 45 percent of the U.S. population could be hit.

In another telephone interview Gen. Keegan said there was not the "slightest doubt" in his mind that the survival ratio in the event of a nuclear war would strongly favor the Soviets. "The strategic balance has been rendered meaningless," he said.

Statements such as Turner's, he added, "serve only to mislead the entire United States as to the . . . enormous lead" of the Soviet Union in planning for survival from a nuclear attack. This has been their policy since the mid-50s, he stated. The Soviet economy, industrial population and urban population are prepared to survive "the most savage attack we could muster," he said.

The U.S. civil defense effort is mainly aimed at relocating populations of critical areas if an attack appears imminent. However, Defense Secretary Harold Brown told Congress in his annual military report that an interagency study is evaluating the strategic implications of civil defense and may result in changes in the U.S. program.